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ABSTRACT

This study was undertaken to determine the ethnic and racial composition of corporations in Detroit, Michigan. The extent to which members of the Polish, Italian, Black, and Latino communities have penetrated the centers of power and influence in Detroit-based corporations was investigated. These groups comprise 33.8% of the Metropolitan Detroit population. The 100 largest Detroit corporations were identified. Four methods were used to determine the ethnic origin of the people occupying the positions under study: surname identification; a 50% individual questionnaire sample; research of existing biographical data; and a 100% phone survey. A comparison of the percentages of officers and directors whose backgrounds are Polish, Latino, Black, or Italian to the percentage distribution of these four groups in the Metropolitan population clearly shows an under representation of the four groups in Detroit's executive suites. Ninety percent of the 100 had no directors who were Polish. Only four corporations had any Black officers and the 15 Black directors represented 14 different corporations. Over 90 corporations had no Latino officers and only six of the 100 corporations had Latin directors. Although Italians had the more numerous representation of the four groups, 80 of the 100 corporations had no Italian directors and 78 had no Italian officers. The findings closely coincide with the findings of other studies and add to the national profile reflecting disparity in ethnic and racial representation in the corporate community. (Author/RM)

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ECONOMIC ELITE STUDY

DETROIT 1975

Gerald Driggs

This study was conducted with the research assistance of Margaret Judy. Ms. Judy is a student completing a year of concentrated study at the Merrill Palmer Institute in Detroit. Her contribution was invaluble. Mr. James Boyce, an urban sociologist, and Dr. Paul Wrobel an urban anthropologist added dimension to the study with their insightful and critical suggestions. Mr. Boyce and Dr. Wrobel are faculty members at the Merrill Palmer Institute.

Gerald E. Driggs

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ECONOMIC ELITE STUDY - DETROIT 1975

Gerald E. Driggs

I. Introduction

A recent study of the Chicago area's largest corporations documented significant under representation of Blacks, Poles, Italians, and Latins in the executive suites of these corporations. In this study "The Minority Report", Dr. Russell Barta concluded that "Poles, Latins, and Blacks were virtually absent from the upper eschelons of Chicago's largest corporations."[1] His conclusions strongly contradict the popular myth that the American corporation is a "truly public institution bound to the same criteria of selection that today affect government service—freedom from bias and the requirement at the same time to represent and reflect all parts of the American population."[2]

Dr. Barta suggested the need for similar studies to determine the extent to which ethnics have penetrated the corporate executive suites in other major metropolitan areas. This study attempts to provide such data for the Metropolitan Detroit area. Basically this study is a replication of the Chicago study thereby contributing vital information to a developing national profile illustrating the opportunity of ethnics to reach the highest levels of corporate power and influence in the American Society.

II. Statement of the problem

The importance of this effort is intensified by two considerations: a) the singularly unique role the corporation plays in influencing life nationally and internationally, and b) the scarcity of adequate research determing the ability of members of select ethnic groups to reach levels of power and prestige in this society.

The American economic system is highly complicated and diversified. One of the outstanding characteristics of the American economy is the high concentration of economic power centered in the corporate structure. Recent figures suggest that in excess of 75% of the national income and employment are accounted for by corporations.[3] The inordinate ability and opportunity of the corporate community to influence the processes of public policy formulation has been well documented. The growing power and scope of corporate influence over the lives of millions of people, domestically and internationally staggers the imagination. Richard J. Barnett and Ronald E. Miller suggest that multinational corporations, based almost

exclusively in the United States, will, because of size and "global reach", overshadow the nations of the world, and may be in process of superseding them.[4]

As mentioned previously, recent studies have been conducted to determine the ethnic and racial composition of the executive suites of the largest of these corporations in selected cities throughout the country.[5] By determining the representation of various ethnic groups on boards of directors and in officer positions, definitive statements about the accessibility of these powerful positions by all people, regardless of race or ethnic origin, have been made. The widely accepted notion of equal accessibility to all realms of society combined with a diverse ethnic society would lead ideally to a proportionally representitive distribution of ethnics at all levels of the corporate hierarchy. These studies have clearly documented that the corporate hierarchies do not have such representation. These studies negate the popular myth of a democratized corporate structure.

In his Minority Report, Dr. Barta speaks of a "national preoccupation with evaluating the success or failure of various ethnic groups in gaining their share in the American system for distributing income and power."[6] This preoccupation has surfaced most dramatically in recent years as the latent consciousness of many ethnic groups has been aroused by the realization that there has been systematic and pervasive disparity in the sharing of the affluence of American society.

Recent research identifying some of the barriers groups of people, identified ethnically or racially have and do face, tends to refute some of the central democratic characteristics long attributed to American society; not the least of which was the notion that systematic guarantees of equal opportunity exists for those displaying equal effort and abilities.

These assumptions have been propagated at all levels of the social, political, and economic hierarchies. The idea of a common entrance status at the bottom and a subsequent rise over a period of time has been a commonly accepted principal. Research has been conducted suggesting that "it is especially at the elite level that democratic ideology appears to insist most strongly upon open processes of recruitment and advancement."[7] A recent study of private enterprise by the National Association of Manufacturers observes: "Two . . . . things have been of outstanding and dominating importance in our development. Our system of representative democracy and our system of individual enterprise . . . Inevitable and irrevocably the two go hand in hand."[8]

Have these ideals been actualized in Detroit, one of the leading corporate industrial centers of the world? Has the economic power structure been open and accessible to all groups? Do the studies cited previously investigating the ethnic penetration of other corporate centers reflect local phenomena or are there similar patterns noticeable elsewhere?

III. Purpose

The purpose of this study was to answer some of these questions by investigating the extent to which members of the Polish, Italian, Black, and

Latino communities have penetrated the centers of power and influence in Detroit based corporations. Because of the economic leadership role Detroit has played historically and presently, and because of its almost singularly unique ethnic composition, this study takes on added significance.

The study originated at the request of the South East Michigan Ethnic Heritage Studies Center. (S.M.E.H.S.C.). Although the scope of S.M.E.H.S.C.'s activities includes work with over fifty ethnic groups throughout Southeast Michigan, the study focused on the aforementioned groups because the results would be comparable to the recent Chicago study, and because of the numerical significance of these groups to Metropolitan Detroit's total population. Collectively these groups comprise 33.8 percent of the Metropolitan Detroit population. (See table 2).

IV. Methodology

A. Determining ethnic origin:

The main task of identifying the ethnic origin of the people occupying the positions we investigated was accomplished by employing four separate methods.

A. Sur-name identification.
B. A 50% individual questionnaire sample.
C. Research of existing biographical data.
D. A 100% phone survey to all corporations included on the list.

To aid in sur-name identification a panel of representatives from each of the communities included in the study (Polish American Congress-Michigan chapter, Latin Americans for Social Economic Development, the Italian Cultural Center, and New Detroit Incorporated) acted as consultants. In addition, consultants from Wayne State University, The Merrill Palmer Institute, and the South East Michigan Ethnic Heritage Studies Center, assisted in this effort. In regard to Blacks, name identification was deleted and replaced by contacting a host of knowledgeable business, community, and political leaders who are familiar with each of the corporations investigated.

To assure greater reliability these methods were completed in a sequencial cross check manner. (i.e. method A was cross checked by B, B by C, A by B and C, etc.). The consultant data was collected individually and compared one to the other.

We are confident that this approach produced highly reliable results. If there are any errors in the final tally for each group, the margin of error would not be sufficently great to invalidate the findings of this study. The results of the individual questionnaire and phone survey produced only five contradictions to the sur-name identification and consultant information. All 2,280 positions were cross checked by methods B, C, and D.

B. Selection of corporations (points of clarification).

We faced several problems in determing the list of the area's largest corporations and these problems in part illustrate the increasingly complicated nature of business enterprise in this country. The complexity of the organizational maze and interlocking relationships prevented easy identification or categorization.

The following criteria were agreed upon:

1. Based on the 1975 Dunn & Bradstreet Million Dollar Directory listings of net sales for 1974, the 100 largest corporations were chosen from thousands located in the Metropolitan Detroit area. The largest utilities, banks, industrial firms, and manufacturers are included.

2. Twenty-seven of these corporations are found on the Fortune Magazine's 1974 list of the 500 largest industrial corporations or Fortune's list of largest non-industrial firms in the U.S. Privately held as well as publically held corporations were included. We did this because no distinction can be made between the impact of corporations on local communities, whether privately or publically held. The inter-locking relationships (directorships, etc.) between the two types of corporate entities suggests overlapping impacts not accounted for if kept separate.

3. Following the same line of reasoning, subsidaries, when total net sales or total resources available, fell within the accepted limits, were included. When the holding company was not located in the Metro-Detroit area, separate data was collected for it and comparative analysis was made.

   Our main pupose was to investigate the opportunity for Blacks, Poles, Italians, and Latinos to penetrate into the executives suites. In essence to see "who has made it"? No significant difference exists between patterns found when using the subsidaries when appropriate, as compared to the holding company. If the corporation was large enough to be included in the 100 listing, our feeling was that fact alone warranted investigation. Twenty-five of the 100 corporations were subsidaries. Fourteen were held by corporations based outside of Metropolitan Detroit.

4. We chose to investigate the ethnic penetration into the executive suites by reviewing the executive officers (V.P. rank or higher) and board of directors positions. No honorary board members were included nor were any assistant officers. Information about directors and officers were taken from the latest annual reports released by each corporation. In addition, the 1975 Dunn & Bradstreet Million Dollar Directory and 1975 edition of Poores Index was used.

   Our task was to determine the number of positions (in the two categories) occupied by members of the Polish, Latino, Black, or Italian communities. The number of directors of all 100 corporations totaled 945; the number of officers 1,335. An officer who also was a member of the board of directors of the same company was counted twice, once as a director, once as an officer.

IV. Conclusions and findings

A basic comparison of the executive suite data to the population figures of each of the four groups in the metropolitan area has been made. This

serves as a basic indicator of the opportunity of groups of people to "make it" to the pinacles of power in the corporate hierachy. The patterns of this representation have been explored to determine what type of penetration has occurred, if any, adding dimension to the initial population comparison.

. When one compares (table 2) the percentages of officers and directors whose backgrounds are Polish, Latino, Black or Italian, to the percentage distribution of these four groups in the Metropolitan Detroit population, the under representation of these four in Detroit's executive suites is blatently clear. (The impact of this statement is compounded when its validity is supported by using both sets of population data; the U.S. Census figures and the estimates based on first, second, and third generation information. The question then changes from is there under-representations to how much and to what extent? (See table 2). The Italian representation when compared to the population figures is the only one of the four groups that reflects relative equal representation. Upon closer scrutinization, however, these statistical figures provide quite a different explanation. The figures listed represent the number of positions filled, which should not be equated with a different person filling each seperate position. For example, in regard to Italians three people fill twelve positions. If they were to be counted only once, the percentage of directors who are Italian would be reduced from three(3)percent to 2.6 percent. An equally obvious reduction would be noticed in the percentage of officers who are Italian; from 2.5 percent to 2.0 percent.

median population

Using the ^ figures we find that although Blacks make up 19 percent of the metropolitan population, only .4 percent of the executive officers are Black. Poles make up 9.5 percent of the population, but only 1.4 percent of the executive officers are Polish. Latinos yield 1.8 percent, yet only .6 percent of the officers are Latinos. (See table 2).

The same general pattern of underrepresentation holds when comparing the number of directors who are Black, Polish, Latino, or Italian. Although the percentages are somewhat higher the increase does not suggest significant representation. The use of the phrase "ethnic penetration" to describe this representation may be a misnomer. More accurate a description would be "symbolic representation" as the four groups are virtually absent from the executive suites of Detroit's largest corporations. Ninety percent of the 100 had no directors who were Polish; 81 had no officers. Only 4 corporations had any Black officers and the 15 Black directors represented 14 different corporations. Ninety-three corporations had no Latino officers and only six of the 100 corporations had Latino directors. Although Italians had the more numerous representation of the four groups, 80 of the 100 corporations had no Italian directors and 78 had no Italian officers. More significant was the fact that 44 percent of the corporations studied, had no Blacks, Poles, Latinos, or Italians either as directors or as officers. Equally significant is the fact that 66 percent of the corporations had one position or less filled by members of the four groups. This data clearly points out that the representation existing is symbolic and that members of the Black, Polish, Italian, and Latino communities have not penetrated into the executive suites.

The patterns of representation have additional significant dimensions. The major source of representation for Blacks was in board of directors appointments. As mentioned earlier, this can only be construed as symbolic as the 15 representatives are found in 14 different corporations and are of recent appointment. The corporations are either banks, utilities, or fall into the category of the 10 largest industrial firms in the area. (See table 3).

No Latinos, Poles, or Italians were in the executive suites of the utilities. Latino representation was not large enough to yield what could be determined a pattern either in the officer positions or on the board of directors.

The heaviest concentration of Poles was in the smaller corporations and banks. It is interesting to point out that nine of the 42 positions filled by Poles were from one bank located in Hamtramack, a Polish municipal entity.

The Italian representation had its heaviest concentration in either the largest or smallest of the corporations reviewed. As did the other groups, Italians were found in the various banks studied but in statistically insignificant proportions. (See table 3).

All four groups were similar in that they each had at least one or two persons who occupied executive suite positions in more than one corporation. This underscores our referral to the representation as "symbolic" in that the figures cited do not necessarily refer to seperate individuals occupying single positions.

In summary we have found that comparison of this executive suite data to the Metropolitan Detroit population figures and the charting of patterns of representation, clearly points out the blatent absence of Poles, Blacks, Italians, and Latinos in the powerful decision making positions of the Detroit area's largest corporations. The findings closely coincide with the findings of the Minority Report and add to the national profile reflecting disparity in ethnic and racial representation in the corporate community.

A number of concerns and questions for further contemplation are raised as a result of this research. Given the apparent "closed" nature of the corporate hierarchy, what possibilities exist for its democratization? What similarities exist in the composition of other institutional executive hierarchies? Does the overlap between the business world and other societal realms (i.e. universities, news media, churches, foundations, hospitals; all organized in to corporations) through interlocking directorships reflect the same "closed" nature. When considering the actual decision making proceedures affecting this society, can one actually speak of their truly democratic nature or do in fact other patterns surface? James Polk writing in The New Republic states that "for many years the boards of American business have been a closed shop, a system of ingrown groups in which the controlling management would choose its own watchdogs, with an occasional minority mascot named to blunt the winds of public opinion. Corporations will be waging the battle of public accountability the rest of this century, and perhaps beyond."11

THE 100 LARGEST DETROIT CORPORATIONS
(based on net sales)

* Advanced Mortgage Corporation
Allied Supermarkets Inc.
American Motors Inc.
Arma Corporation
Bank of Commerce—Hamtramack
Bank of Commonwealth—Detroit
Bank of Dearborn
Barclay James & Co. Ltd.
Bendix Corporation
Bormans Inc.
Budd Company
Bundy Corporation
Burroughs Corporation
Canrasser Bros. Building Company
Chatham Supermarkets Inc.
\+ Chrysler Corporation
* Chrysler Financial Corporation
* Chrysler Leasing
* Chrysler Motors
* Chrysler Realty Corporation
City National Bank—Pontiac
* Complete Auto Transit
Crowleys Milner & Co.
Crown Packing
Cunningham Durg Stores
Darin and Armstrong Inc.
* Detroit Bank and Trust Co.
Detroit Bank Corporation
Detroit Edison Co.
* Detroit Gasket & Manufacturing Co.
* Detroit—Toledo & Iron Railroad
Douglas Lomason Co.
* Dura Corporation
Edgar W. H. & Son Inc.
Ex-Cell-O Corporation
Federal Mogul Corporation
Federals Corporation
\+ Ford Motor Company
* Ford Motor Credit Company
Frederick & Herrud
Fruehauf Corporation
General Motors Corporation
* Great Lakes Gas Transmission
Guardian Industrial Corporation
* Gulf and Western Metals
Handlman Company
* Hudson J. L. Company
Hughes and Hatcher Inc.
Hy-Grade Food Products Inc.
* ITT Thompson Industries Inc.
Industrial Fuels Corporation
* Jeep Corporation
* K-Mart Enterprises Inc.
Kelly Services Inc.
Kelsey-Hayes Company
\+ Kresge S. S. Company
Liberty State Bank and Trust
Kuhlman Corporation

* denotes subsidary
\+ denotes holding company

Masco Corporation
Manufacturers National Bank
McCord Corporation
McLonth Steel Corporation
* Michigan Bell Telephone Co.
* Michigan Consolodated Gas Company
Blue Cross Blue Shield
Michigan Milk Producers Association
Michigan Mutual Liability
Michigan National Bank—North Metro
Michigan National Bank—Oakland
Michigan National Bank—West Metro
Michigan National Bank
Michigan Wisconsin Pipeline
Mt. Clemens Bank
National Bank—Southfield
National Bank—Royal Oak
National Bank of Detroit
National Bank of Wyandotte—Taylor
National Casualty Company
Oxymetal Finishing Corporation
* Parke Davis & Company
Peoples Bank—Trenton
Peoples State Bank—Detroit
Polk RJ & Company
Pontiac State Bank
* Prophet Foods
* Robbins Jim Seat Belt Company
Ross Roy
Scherer R. P. Corporation
Scott Industries
Stroh Brewery Company
The Wayne Oakland Bank
Thomas Build Homes Inc.
Trenton State Bank
* Utley James Inc.
Van Pelt Corporation
* Walker Hiram Inc.
+* Walker Hiram & Sons Inc.
Whitehead Kales Company
Winkleman Stores Incorporated

* denotes subsidary
+ denotes holding company

TABLE # 1

Number of corporations of the 100 examined which had no directors or officers who were Poles, Italians, Latinos, or Blacks.*

GROUP	Number of Corp. without Director	Number of Corp. without Officer
POLES:	90	81
ITALIANS:	80	78
LATINOS:	94	93
BLACKS	86	96

*It is important to point out that 44 of the 100 corporations had no Poles, Italians, Latinos, or Blacks either as Directors or as Officers.

TABLE # 2

Select Ethnic Group Representation from the Detroit Metropolitan Area and on the Board of Directors and among the officers of the 100 largest Detroit area corporations.

GROUP	Percentage of Metro-Area Population			Directors		Officers	
				Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
	*1970 U.S. Census Data	**Estimated Ethnic Pop.	***Median				
POLES	4.8%	14.2%	9.5%	18	1.9%	24	1.4%
ITALIANS	2.1%	4.8%	3.5%	29	3%	34	2.5%
LATINOS	1.4%	2.1%	1.8%	6	.6%	8	.6%
BLACKS	18.0%	20.0%	19.0%	15	1.6%	6	.4%
ALL OTHER	73.7%	58.9%	66.2%	877	92.9%	1263	95.1%
TOTALS:	100 %	100 %	100 %	945	100 %	1335	100 %

*The estimates are based on data taken from U.S. Census of Population, 1970, Michigan, Detailed Characteristics, Table 49. We must keep in mind that the U.S. Census information estimates the number of people that meet the criteria for specific categorizations based on language and "foreign stock" criteria. The use of "mother tongue" data would be a low indicator of ethnic population—as it is likely many 3rd-4th generation Poles, Italians, and Latinos would not be included. The "foreign stock" figures have similar limitations. No one U.S. Census category accounts for a definition of an ethnic group as a people set off by race, religion, and national origin, or "as a people with a sense of community derived from networks of family relations which have over a number of generations been the carriers of a common experiences."[9] "But even in terms of the Census restricted definition, over 60 percent of Detroit's population in 1960 could be identified as members of some ethnic group."[10]

**With this in mind we chose to use available U.S. Census data as a minimal indicator and estimates derived from established, recognized ethnic organizations as additional comparatives. These estimates are all taken from organizations who have made projections based on organizational membership, familiarity with the local communities, and various population studies.

***For our comparative purposes, the median figure was used.

TABLE # 3

Ethnic representation in the executive suites according to size of corporation determined by amount of Total Sales.

TOTAL SALES (1 million dollar designations)	800 - 18,500				500 - 799				300 - 499				100 - 299				40 - 99				ALL BANKS			
Number of Corporations	13				5				10				16				33				23			
Total Positions Reviewed	434				120				198				282				539				692			
Number of Positions filled by:	Blks.	Poles	IT	Lat	Blks.	Poles	IT	Lat	Blks.	Poles	IT	Lat	Blks.	Pole	IT	Lat	Blks.	Poles	IT	Lat	Blks.	Poles	IT	La
	8	4	20	4	2	0	3	1	2	3	3	0	0	4	7	1	0	10	14	1	9	21	17	7

400
300
200
100
60
40
20
10

FOOTNOTES

[1]Barta, Russell, "The Minority Report", (Chicago; The Institute of Urban Life, 1974), p. 4.

[2]Glazer, Nathan, Daniel P. Moynihan, Beyond The Melting Pot, (Cambridge; M.I.T. Press, 1963), p.208.

[3]Withers, William, The Corporations and Social Change, (New York; Barron's Educationl Series, Inc. 1972), p. 1.

[4]Barnel, Richard J., Ronald E. Muller, Global Reach: The Power of the Multinational Corporations, (Simon & Schuster, New York, 1975).

[5]See for example: Marger, Martin, The Force of Ethnicity: A study of Urban Elites, Journal of University Studies—Wayne State University—Ethnic Monograph Series; Winter 1974, Vol. 10 # 5 also Barta, Russell, "The Minority Report", (Chicago; The Institute of Urban Life, 1974).

[6]Barta, Russell, "The Minority Report", (Chicago; The Institute of Urban Life, 1974), p. 2.

[7]See for example: Harold D. Lasswell, Daniel Lerner, and C. Easton Rothwell, The Comparative Study of Elites, (Stanford; Stanford University, 1952).

[8]Quoted in Sutton et. al., The American Business Creed, p. 25-26.

[9]Feinstein, Otto; "Why Ethnicity?" p. 2, in Immigrants and Migrants; The Detroit Ethnic Experience, ed. David Hartman, (Detroit: University Thought Publishing Company, 1974).

[10]Agcos, Carol; "Ethnicity in Detroit", p. 391, in Immigrants and Migrants; Detroit Ethnic Experience, ed. David Hartman, (Detroit: University Thought Publishing Company, 1974).

[11]Polk, James R., "Slush - Bribery and Other Costs of Doing Business Abroad", The New Republic, Vol. 172, No. 20, Issue 3149, May 17, 1975, p.23.